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The [anti-migration](#) and racist politics of the Italian Right, repeatedly [echo](#) ed by the media, has paid off in the March elections. After a particularly toxic electoral campaign, far right parties such as Matteo Salvini's League (Lega) and Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d' Italia) managed to collect more than 20% of the votes.

The campaign was dominated by fearmongering and attacks against migrants, scapegoats of Italy's economic problems. A social media [analysis by Amnesty Italy](#) shows that 95% of hate speech in the run up to the elections came from the centre-right and was used by the three main leaders of the coalition (Silvio Berlusconi, Matteo Salvini and Giorgia Meloni).

In a series of articles dedicated to [the panel at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia](#), the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) is questioning the role of the media in the rise of far-right. In Italy's case, the media provided platforms for hate speech and anti-migrants rhetoric without questioning claims, figures and statements of the right-wing leaders. Some media also gave disproportionately big space to the so-called "fascists of the Third Millennium" or the party CasaPound that won a support of less than 1% of Italian voters.

"CasaPound has implemented a strategy after analysing the media at their disposal and understood, better than others, how to use them to their advantage, by creating and planning actions that could reach the mainstream media. CasaPound also 'cleaned up' its image in order to enter the public debate. Its members were invited to TV talk shows on a daily basis, but their violent positions were basically never questioned. There is also reluctance in the media to use the label 'fascists' to define CasaPound," journalist and author of "[How the Italian media have helped glamourised fascism](#)" Claudia Torrisi explains to MDI.



"While in 2016 the divisive discourse could have been summarised in 'us' [Italians] against 'them' [migrants], last year we have observed a new element - hostility against the Italians who support migrants, either individually or as members of civil society organisations," says Riccardo Noury from the Amnesty Italy. He believes that in times of austerity measures, it is easier to identify an enemy or a menace rather than to convince the public that those measures are good.

An example of how damaging was the campaign against NGOs in rescue missions at sea is an

experience shared by the activist Giampiero Obiso, a member of the Rome-based volunteers network [Baobab Experience](#) .

In an interview for MDI, Obiso described how “a group of fascists and racists came to the camp [set by the Baobab Experience volunteers to provide shelter for 150 migrants currently], insulting the volunteers and threatening to burn all the migrants”.

Another incident happened when [a gang of skinheads barged in on voluntary workers](#) in the city of Como denouncing their efforts to help migrants in Italy, which they claimed was subject to an “invasion”. “These kind of groups,” Leonardo Bianchi from VICE Italia told us, “operate as ‘bridgeheads’ for the institutional right-wing parties. They talk about ethnic substitution and similar theories that are also constantly repeated by Matteo Salvini and Giorgia Meloni without being questioned on the matter by most of the Italian journalists”.

MDI will hold a panel [“Fascism is back. Is journalism part of the problem or of a solution?”](#) at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia on 13 April 2018.

By questioning the role of some media in the past events, MDI is hoping to initiate a debate on possible answers to extremism of all kinds while together with its European partners it has been engaged in countering religious hate incidents against Muslims, Jewish and Christian communities through the [Get the Trolls Out project](#) .